

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

criterion: a principle or standard to be used in the process of judging something or making a decision

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Define the problem. Formulate a problem statement that expresses the problem simply yet completely. If the problem is complex, break it down into smaller, more manageable problems that you'll solve separately.

Step 2: Generate possible solutions. Brainstorm a wide range of solutions to the problem. To help you find possibilities, follow these guidelines for brainstorming:

- Don't be afraid to include unusual or farfetched ideas.
- Don't find fault or criticize. Save that for later.
- Think about different perspectives, those of the people involved.
- Think in extremes: What are some "worst possible" ideas?
- Think what you would do if you could wish away some limits.
- Think what you might do in a "perfect world"?

Step 3: Consider effects and consequences. List the possible outcomes, both positive and negative, for each of the solutions you have identified. Write a plus (+) sign beside positive outcomes and a minus sign (–) beside negative consequences.

Step 4: Generate criteria to judge options. List criteria that will help you judge or weigh the options. What expectations or demands should your solution meet? Which of those criteria is *most* important?

EXAMPLE criteria: expense, time-savings, making parents happy, safety, fun

Use your criteria to evaluate which of the negative consequences can be tolerated and which of the positive outcomes are *most* desired. If necessary, generate new compromise solutions that combine parts of different options. Finally, choose the solution that *best* meets the criteria you identified.